



Community Preservation Act Committee

Date: January 28, 2021

Time: 7:02 pm – 8:01pm

Location: Conducted remotely due to Covid-19.

Minutes

Remote Participation: Eric Helmuth,
Eugene Benson,
Pamela Heidell,
Leslie Mayer,
Charlie McCabe,
JoAnn Robinson,
Ann Woodward.
Not in Attendance: Nick Mitropolous,
Clarissa Rowe.
Also Attending Remotely: Jim Feeney.

Chair Eric Helmuth welcomed members and guests at 7:02 pm. Helmuth explained that due to Covid-19 the meeting was conducted remotely and read through the Town's disclaimers about remote meetings. It was noted the meeting was being recorded.

Eric Helmuth informed the Committee that the Housing Corporation of Arlington withdrew their application for the bridge to the bikeway due to costs of necessary insurance. He noted there are two presentations this evening.

1. Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes

- a. Eric Helmuth noted the meeting minutes will be tabled until the end of the meeting to accommodate guest presenters.

2. Fiscal Year 22 CPA Applicant

- a. Arlington Housing Authority (AHA) – Drake Village. AHA Executive Director John Griffin presented the AHS proposal for Drake Village Envelope Restoration. He noted the proposal is for the cottages on the property that need substantial work, including downspouts, fascia boards, and other rotting building elements. Abacus Architects was hired to perform design the work. The firm is well known and worked on the Manor in 2007.

The cost estimate was approximately \$1.4M to complete all of the necessary work. The architects then broke the work into various smaller packages. Package 1 and package 2 were originally chosen based on the estimates. These packages were put out to bid, and the low bid for all 9 buildings was received by Homer Contracting for a total of \$408k. This amount was less than originally estimated. The AHA is executing a contract for this work and will see when Homer Contracting can start the work. Ideally, they would start in the spring to keep projects moving forward at the property, instead of waiting for July 1st. If possible, John Griffin would like the Committee to consider funding package 3, which would provide for new exterior doors and hardware. Package 3 also has also alternates for provide for key fobs and electric door operators at exterior doors to common area stairwells. The base bid is estimated at \$279,459 and the alternates are estimated at \$182,736. This work would need to be designed and bid.

John Griffin also noted the recent award of a \$500k creative place making grant from the State for this property. This will allow for various improvements to the grounds.

Eric Helmuth would like to confirm package 3 is CPA-eligible, and questioned if any of the work was on the interior of the building. John Griffin confirmed all doors considered are exterior doors.

Eugene Benson asked for confirmation that package 3 was included in the application materials. John Griffin noted that it was. Eugene also asked for confirmation the stairway doors were not located inside the building. At Eugene's request, John Griffin detailed the AHA 5 year capital planning process that occurs via state-standardized software.

Ann Woodward asking about the progress at Winslow Towers. John Griffin confirmed the windows are in storage and awaiting better weather. This was the contractor's decision to postpone installation. AHA will need to hire movers to assist residents with moving furniture away from windows. John Griffin expects less resident impacts with the scope of work planned for Drake Village.

Eric Helmuth asked if asphalt replacement at doors for roll-up would also be included as noted in the application. John Griffin responded this could be considered in the CPA grant or in the creative place making grant. Eric Helmuth will check after the meeting to see if this scope is an allowable use.

Pamela Heidell asked what would occur if Homer Contracting is willing to wait for a July 1st start as the work in packages 1 and 2 align more closely with preservation. John Griffin would prefer to keep projects moving along. Eric Helmuth asked for additional details about the doors, and requested pictures be sent. John Griffin described the doors as being swollen and water damaged, making them difficult to open; the lock systems are also malfunctioning. Eric Helmuth suspects it will be allowable, but the pictures and a short visit may be warranted in the course of due diligence.

Eric Helmuth asked if this work could be considered for ADA compliance. John stated the units themselves are not compliant. John Griffin looks forward to the connections to Drake Village. Leslie Mayer noted Reservoir work will connect to

walking path at Drake Village, where it will be formalized and made accessible. Leslie briefed John Griffin on the CPA meeting last night where the Hurd Field project was discussed. This will be an opportunity for a full walking loop around the field and a connection to the bikeway, all of which will be accessible for the residents of Drake Village. Ann Woodward suggested coordination with the place making grant. Eric Helmuth appreciated this cluster of work planned and work in progress.

b. Somerville Homeless Coalition (SHC) – Leasing Differential. Eric Helmuth noted receipt of letters of support from the Town Manager, Police Chief and Steve DeCoursey. Brielle Short, Director of Programs, presented the Leasing Differential Application. Brielle outlined the SHC permanent supportive housing program this application would support. The program provides certain individuals meeting federal requirements with permanent housing where the residents can stay as long as they like, but some do transition to other forms of subsidized housing. Brielle noted the program includes the provision of case management services, including weekly home visits that allow for access to resources and various connections. This program has been in existence for 20 years to keep clients from returning to homelessness.

Rents in Somerville and Arlington have been increasing, but SHC aims to keep people in their local communities. The program receives funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The funding level is based on fair market rent. Unfortunately, Brielle noted that funding has remained flat, and is projected to do so again due to COVID. This means the funding will not keep pace with area rents. Brielle described this being a result of a switch to a larger Continuum of Care in the State that included larger cities with lower rents, such as Lowell and Lawrence. This impacted the calculation for federal funding, so they did not see the annual bump in funding that is typically expected. Brielle noted this is the impetus for this application for funding. Brielle Short offered experience with a similar funding mechanism through the Somerville Affordable Housing Trust that has been in place for 6 years.

Eric Helmuth asked about the stability of local landlord relationships. Brielle Short offered that a few landlords lease a number of the Arlington units and have done so for over 10 years. Brielle noted the significance of these continuing relationships because the tenants are not always the easiest due to trauma, substance abuse and other issues. As time goes on though, Brielle stated some units are lost due to ownership changes or rent increases and it is challenging to find additional willing landlords.

Eugene Benson asked for a clarification on the lease. Brielle confirmed it is a master lease between SHC and the landlord. SHC then sublets with clients. Eugene Benson also asked about what this differential funding covers. The funding covers the gap between the rent and the amount of the HUD payment, which also has to support the administrative expenses. Brielle explained clients are charged 30% adjusted monthly income, but payments can be inconsistent. Eugene asked if this is expected to be a long-term relationship. Brielle does not want to say no as the future is uncertain, but SHC does recognize a level of sustainability is needed for the program. SHC will continue to explore other available options, but the biggest factor is the level of HUD funding. Eugene also noted there is now an affordable housing trust fund in Arlington.

Eric Helmuth asked about Somerville CPA supporting SHC. Brielle Short explained that Somerville CPA transfers the affordable housing portion of funds to the trust for distribution.

Eugene Benson noted the Committee remains interested in adding affordable units whenever possible, but believes this is also a worthwhile cause.

Eric Helmuth asked about quantifying impacts of avoiding homelessness. Brielle Short noted she does not have statistics, but described the shift in spending to other resources, such as the outreach program with Arlington Health & Human Services and the Police Department. The goal becomes spending on resources to get clients into stable housing.

Ann Woodward asked how recently approved federal rental assistance program will impact SHC. Brielle Short noted only funding received previously was via City of Somerville, nothing from the State. Brielle also pointed out the great need, with monthly applications rising from 7 to 200. This funding will help these clients avoid homelessness.

John Griffin noted the SHC does a great job and provides very valuable services.

3. Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes

a. Eric Helmuth brought the minutes from the January 6th meeting up for review. Pamela Heidell noted there were a few minor typographical errors. Leslie Mayer offered a correction on page 2 regarding the budget review pertaining to Spy Pond Playground. Charlie McCabe moved approval, JoAnn Robinson seconded. All voted in favor via roll call vote.

Leslie Mayer motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:01am, which was seconded by Charlie McCabe. All voted in favor via roll call vote.